



# *The Virginia Saltwater Review*

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by

**Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division**

## **OVERVIEW**

It's summer time fishing in the waters of Virginia this week. Inshore, there are reports of croaker, spot, flounder, sea mullet, and trout. At the bridges, cobia and spadefish were found, and offshore, anglers are finding tuna, marlin and dolphin. The fishing stories must have already migrated south because we are getting numerous calls from Carolina anglers planning trips up to the James River this weekend in search of croaker.

The big event this weekend is Wallace's Bait and Tackle's 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Cobia Tournament, to be held Saturday, July 11, with the Captain's Meeting Friday evening. Fingers are crossed that the Saturday forecast for light winds holds out and numerous cobia make it back to the dock for the 2:30 to 5:00 pm weigh-in. Cobia are a common sight for those hanging around Wallace's during the summer, and expectations are high for this weekend's event. Our own biological sampling team will be there to examine each cobia as they come off the scales, so come on by and see if a 100 pound brute shows up.

## **THE FISHING REPORT**

### **Chincoteague**

At Captain Bob's Marina, anglers are still catching keeper flounder in the Chincoteague Channel and along Queen's Sound. Croaker are everywhere, and some bluefish are coming in from the surf. Offshore, small yellowfin tuna and white marlin were caught at the Norfolk Canyon, cobia were found at the Lumpy Bottom, and good-sized dolphin were found in both places. The wrecks also produced some triggerfish, spadefish, and tautog.

### **Onancock**

Capt. Wil, of Onancock, reports that anglers have been picking up a few more keeper flounder in the area, up to 24 inches. A mixed bag of croaker and spot are available as well as numerous sea mullet. Sharks

have been spotted around the area as well.

### **Wachapreague**

At the Wachapreague Marina, staff reports numerous bluefin tuna (50-pound class) at the 26-Mile Hill. Dolphin and king mackerel were spotted there as well. Yellowfin tuna and one blue marlin were found at the Norfolk Canyon. Inshore, there has been a lot of flounder, but few keepers.

Flounder fishing has been excellent at Wachapreague, according to staff at Captain Zed's. While there were a lot of throwbacks, there have been numerous flounder. Best places are Cedar Island and near the Coast Guard Station at Paramore Island. Croaker and sea mullet are mixed in as well. Offshore fishing at the 26-Mile Hill has been excellent for bluefin tuna, gaffer dolphin, and king mackerel. At the Norfolk Canyon, few yellowfin tuna and gaffer dolphin were caught.

### **Cape Charles**

At Chris' Bait and Tackle, several cobia citations were recorded over the past two weeks, and the largest was 96 pounds. There were a few flounder citations as well, landed from Buoy 42 and the Cell. There were two state-record blueline tilefish—the first was 20 pounds, 10 ounces, and the second was 23 pounds, 5 ounces. Other fishing includes croaker catches near Oyster and small croaker, grey trout, king fish, and even a citation flounder at the Kiptopeke Pier.

According to Ernie at Cherrystone Bait and Tackle, cobia fishing in the lower bay is very good. Croaker and spot are also appearing in larger numbers and sizes.

### **Lower Bay/Bridge Tunnel**

Several citations were reported from Cobb's Marina this week. On July 5<sup>th</sup>, a 7-pound, 1-ounce flounder was landed from the 4<sup>th</sup> island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. The week earlier, a 7-pound, 4-ounce flounder was landed from the same area, and flounder release citations were reported. Spanish mackerel have been biting from Cape Henry to the Little Creek jetties. Spadefish have also been found between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

At Salt Ponds Marina, several boats reported keeper flounder. Flounder trips last week were limiting out with keepers, but there were no citations.

At the York River Fishing Center, two red drum release citations were reported from Fisherman's Island. Cobia have started biting at the York Spit, and a citation 56-pound, 8-ounce cobia was weighed in on June 24<sup>th</sup>. A 12-pound sheepshead was also landed from the York River where a mixed bag of flounder, spot, and croaker was reported.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

Cobia are being caught in good numbers by both sight casting and chumming. The Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel area has been good for both techniques with the Inner Middle Grounds being the top spot to set up a chum slick. Spadefish are available at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, the

Chesapeake Light Tower, the Cell, and over some of the coastal wrecks. Some large sheepshead were coming from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, and black drum have taken up residence around the islands. Large red drum are still being caught, but mostly by anglers targeting cobia. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) can be found in the shallows almost everywhere. Spanish mackerel fishing is good all along the Virginia Beach ocean front. Flounder fishing has improved some with large fish being caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and at the Cell area. The Gwynn's Island area is producing some really nice speckled trout. The South Tower is absolutely loaded with amberjack. King mackerel have joined the mix with fish being caught on the inshore humps by anglers targeting tuna and along the ocean front by anglers targeting them with live bait. Bluefin tuna are available from the inshore hills like the Hot Dog and 26-Mile Hill on out to 30 fathoms. The fish are either in the 40-inch range or they are in the 150-pound range. Yellowfin tuna are more of a challenge to find, but they are a nice class of fish when you catch them. Dolphin catches are very good. Billfish encounters are becoming common, and there are some bigeye tuna and wahoo in the mix.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following: The Independence Day week was a fishing success, with most of the summertime players in place. The two final heavy hitters arrived this past week, tarpon and king mackerel. The tarpon is one of the most prestigious sportfishing species anywhere. These covert fish take residence each July in the backwaters of the Eastern Shore. According to the folks at Chris' Bait and Tackle, the silver kings were off to a good start, with a few sighting, hook-ups, and landings. But with the recent cool-down and easterly winds, this trend slowed to a halt.

The next big debut was the king mackerel. The first long awaited landing of the season was reported from the Little Island Fishing Pier. These fish are known for their speed, making them a prized target for anglers. Easterly winds are good for promoting king activity. Spanish mackerel continue to provide excellent action for trollers, with Cape Henry still the best location. These fish are a nice class, with a few 3-pounders in the mix.

Cobia hunters continue to chum on the lower bay shoals, such as Latimer Shoal and the Inner Middle Grounds, where plenty of medium-sized fish in the 20- to 30-pound range are cooperating. The biggest fish are still coming from sight casters, who are finding fish in open water along the lower bay channels, and the oceanfront.

Flounder are a good bet, with plenty of keepers available at most of the flattie hot spots. Folks working the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel are faring well with limits of decent fish and a smattering of citations while using live bait. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> island tubes produced best this week. Drifting with well-presented strip baits is doing the job for many boats off Willoughby and inside Lynnhaven Inlet lately.

Spadefish are still available, although anglers are losing interest as they pursue different species. The Chesapeake Light Tower and the Cell are providing some decent spade action, but more boats are targeting these mighty fighters at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. The 3<sup>rd</sup> island is still the top spade producing location at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, where anglers are also bailing nice 3-pound trigger fish. Sheepshead are still biting along the tubes, islands, and pilings of the

Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, with some days better than others. Try fiddler crabs, blue crabs, sandfleas, and clam suspended near structure for a sheep nibble, and you may get lucky. Tautog are also biting, but interest seems to be low.

Black drum sightings, with scattered hook-ups, are coming from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> islands, with some fish pushing 80-pounds. These are slow growing fish, reaching enormous sizes, so reviving these docile swimmers will boost their chances of survival. Red drum are still taking baits intended for cobia, and several sightings of schooling reds near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel are providing excellent top water opportunities.

Some large croaker pushing 2 to 3 pounds are lurking around the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel and the Cell, while the hard head hunters in Oyster are filling multiple coolers with nice fish. The folks at the Fishing Center are reporting that decent spot moved into Rudee Inlet, with most fish ranging from 8 to 14 ounces. A few puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are still hitting, but the best action is coming from Lynnhaven, where pups are ranging up to about 23 inches. Pompano began biting this week along the ocean surfline and piers, with some fish pushing a pound.

Amberjack are enticing many anglers to make the long run to the Southern Towers lately. Many are willing to take your live bait, with a few big fish also testing a few backs. Jigging is also an effective method for jacks when your live well runs dry.

The offshore bite off Virginia is a good mix lately. Although the bite slowed a little over the past few days, the Hotdog, the Fingers, and 26-mile Hill are good places to try. King mackerel are also a possibility in these same areas. Trollers can continue to expect scattered yellowfin tuna, with a nice class of dolphin rounding out catches. Wahoo are beginning to bite off trollers, and a few white marlin have moved in. Mako sharks are also still around.

### **Virginia Middle Bay**

Roger, of Jetts' Hardware, reports the fishing has been great. Croaker can be found in the deeper holes, and spot have been averaging approximately ½ pound. The rule of thumb for speckled trout rumors is for every catch you hear about, there are 10 others that people are not telling you about. Flounder are at the Potomac River jetties, but the keeper ratio is pretty low. Small bluefish are around, but there are no reports of Spanish mackerel yet.

Butch, at Garrett's Marina, reports that the croaker are back again and averaging around two pounds. These fillet-sized critters appear to be haunting oyster beds, so make sure you have some strong leader to prevent oyster shell nicks from costing you fish. The White Stone Bridge area has been producing some keeper flounder.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, reported the following:

Good weather last week allowed a lot of water activity this weekend. Bay surface temperatures near the Cell are near 80 degrees. Spadefish of all sizes were available at the the Cell, Wolf Trap, and at other bay structures this week. A lot of small fish have moved in, but large fish are still here. Fresh

clams fished in a slick of clam chum work best for these fish. The creeks and rivers are producing small red drum, spot and croaker. Surprisingly, there have been good numbers of medium to large spot available already at the Spike and off Gwynn's Island.

One speckled trout citation was recorded this week from the Gwynn's Island area. Flounder fishing has improved a bit with better numbers coming from Buoy 42 and the Cell areas. A citation was brought in from the Cell on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Brief bites at the turn of a tide are producing best.

### **Virginia Beach**

According to staff at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center, spadefish, cobia, and inshore shark are around, and schools of Spanish mackerel and taylor bluefish have been spotted running along the coastline. In Rudee Inlet, flounder, a few puppy drum, and more taylor bluefish have been caught, and staff is expecting to see spot soon. Offshore, lots of bluefin and yellowfin tuna, scattered dolphin, and the first of the billfish are available (mostly white marlin, but one sail fish has shown up as well). Tuna numbers have slowed, but sizes have increased. Most offshore trips have come back with at least one tuna over 100 pounds. The largest yellowfin so far this year was 186 pounds.

Gaffer dolphin, two white marlin releases, and 6 yellowfin tuna in the 40- to 50-pound class were reported from Fisherman's Wharf Marina this week.

### **Virginia Piers**

At the Lynnhaven Pier, anglers were catching, spot, croaker, sea mullet, a few keeper flounder, and blue crabs.

Spot fishing is doing well at the Virginia Beach Pier. Spanish mackerel have also been caught along with a few bluefish and numerous spadefish.

At the Little Island Fishing Pier at Sandbridge, a few spadefish were caught recently. Over the past few weeks, spot, bluefish, Spanish mackerel, croaker, flounder, red drum, a few king fish, and a few pompano were all landed.

The Buckroe Fishing Pier reported small croaker, spot, shark, spadefish, black sea bass, bluefish, and a small cobia over the past two weeks. Flounder fishing has also been decent, and several 20- and 23-inch fish have been caught.

### **Outer Banks, NC**

Offshore fishing out of Oregon Inlet continues to keep anglers happy with numerous dolphin being landed. Yellowfin tuna catches have been decreasing in numbers but increasing in size. Other species that continue to be caught with less frequency include wahoo, king mackerel, bonito, and skipjack, blackfin, and bigeye tuna. All three species of billfish are currently available along with a plethora of bottom fish including tilefish, groupers, snappers and sea bass. Striped bass can be found offshore at ranges of 12 to 15 miles with tautog, sheepshead, and triggerfish on the wrecks. Bluefish and Spanish

mackerel are working the nearshore areas with people catching their limits. The piers and surf fishermen have had equal luck with the bluefish and Spanish mackerel as well. Bottom fishing has seen good numbers of spadefish and moderate amounts of pompano, spot, sea mullet, and puffers. The sounds have seen good numbers of flounder, albeit more throw backs than keepers. Speckled trout can be caught around the Washington Baum Bridge. Bluefish and Spanish mackerel are working the inlet, and sheepshead and black drum are around the Oregon Inlet Bridge.

Fishing south of Oregon Inlet has been slow lately. Sea mullet, bluefish, and flounder were reported around Ramp 55 and behind the motels in the sound. Spanish mackerel could be caught in the surf at sunset. Some speckled trout and flounder were around but hard to find.

Offshore fishing out Hatteras Inlet has been good for anglers wanting to catch dolphin and blackfin tuna. Some billfish have been in the mix as well as king mackerel and wahoo. Inshore fishing has been good with numerous Spanish mackerel and bluefish for those trolling metal. Some speckled trout were in the area as well, but only the early risers were having any luck with them.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.








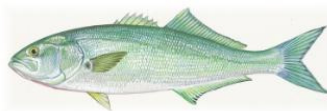
# ***ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!***

## **THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION**

***WANTS YOUR FISH....  
TO MEASURE AND AGE.***

*You catch it, you fillet it,  
but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,  
please donate them to science.*

The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA	SHEEPSHEAD	RED DRUM	BLACK DRUM
			
TAUTOG	KING MACKEREL	SPANISH MACKEREL	BLUEFISH (GREATER THAN 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)
			

**In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a  
ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT, FOR EACH PARTICIPANT,  
PER MONTH of the DONATION.**

**Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:**

**Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)  
Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)  
Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)  
Buckroe Fishing Pier (Hampton)**



# ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!

## Get Hooked! Report at [www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com)

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.



The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

You will be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released.

On those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the number caught and a range of lengths. Reporting individual measurements on more highly prized species -- such as Red Drum, Striped Bass and Flounder -- provides a greater benefit for everyone.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal," and is found at [www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com).

A screenshot of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's Recreational Fishing Online Reporting website. The header includes the commission's name and logo. The main content area is titled "Recreational Saltwater Fishing" and includes a welcome message. It features two sections: "Red Drum Reports are Needed!" which explains the need for length data for a stock assessment, and "New 2008 Tautog Regs" which lists the closed season (May 1 through June 24), minimum size limit (14 inches), and possession limit (4 per person). A sidebar on the left shows the "Virginia Recreational Assessment Program" logo and statistics for June 16, 2008: 1,457 members, 295 trips, and 3,941 catches. At the bottom, there are links for "Related Links" and "Help".



# Introducing the Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program!

- Please help keep our waterways cleaner and safer for:
  - fish
  - birds
  - marine mammals
  - boaters and swimmers
- Deposit used or tangled monofilament fishing line into specially marked containers!



## VMRC-Managed Locations!\*

Ocean View Fishing Pier, Norfolk

Long Bay Pointe Marina, Virginia Beach

Buckroe Fishing Pier, Hampton

Chris' Bait and Tackle, Cape Charles

Capt. Bob's Marina, Chincoteague

**\*DGIF manages other locations throughout Virginia**

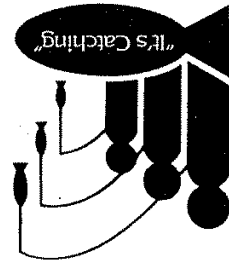
**The Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program is run jointly by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries with support from the Boat US Foundation.**

**If you have any questions about the program, or suggestions for new container locations, please contact Alicia Nelson at (757) 247-2244 or email [alicia.nelson@mrc.virginia.gov](mailto:alicia.nelson@mrc.virginia.gov).**



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*Practice*

## CAREFUL CATCH

**REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH**

**Exhaustion \* Loss of Slime \* Wounds \* Time out of Water**